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Chairman: Mr. Dhakal (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Nepal)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Saha

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In the absence of Mr. Yousfi (Algeria), Mr. Dhakal (Nepal), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 133: Financing of the United Nations Operation in Burundi (A/61/309, A/61/485 and A/61/612)

1. **Mr. Sach** (Controller), introducing the Secretary-General's performance report on the budget of the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB) for the period from 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005 (A/61/612), recalled that, by its resolution 59/15 A, the General Assembly had appropriated an amount of $329,714,400 for the maintenance of ONUB for the period from 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005. As per the table in part III of the report, expenditure for the reporting period had amounted to $303.8 million, resulting in an unencumbered balance of $25.9 million, or 7.9 per cent of the total budget. The main reasons for that variance included the slower than projected deployment of military personnel and civilian police officers, the delayed recruitment of national staff, lower requirements for prefabricated facilities and construction services owing to the increased use of existing permanent structures, the lower number of vehicles acquired and the reduced utilization of the mission's fleet of six military helicopters. Paragraph 22 of the report set out the actions to be taken by the General Assembly in connection with the financing of ONUB.

2. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General on the budget for ONUB for the period from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007 (A/61/309), he said that the proposed budget for the period in question amounted to $144.6 million, representing a reduction of around 50 per cent as compared to the budget for the preceding period. That reduction was attributable to the fact that, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1692 (2006), the mandate of ONUB had been extended only until 31 December 2006.

3. The proposed budget for ONUB provided for the phased repatriation, by 31 December 2006, of all substantive and military personnel, including those temporarily redeployed to the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), and for the administrative liquidation of the mission during the period from 1 January to 30 June 2007. Paragraph 55 of the report set out the actions to be taken by the General Assembly in connection with the financing of ONUB.

4. **Mr. Saha** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/61/485), recalled that budget proposals for peacekeeping operations were usually submitted to the Advisory Committee in February and March to allow sufficient time for their consideration before the commencement of the new financial period on 1 July. However, the proposed budget for ONUB was being considered almost midway into the financial period to which it related. While, on the one hand, that situation had complicated matters, it had also allowed the Advisory Committee to see the full expenditure for the period ended 30 June 2006, which had been well below the level of appropriation. Consequently, a significant sum would eventually be returned to Member States. That latest underexpenditure was part of a persistent pattern of overbudgeting to which the Advisory Committee had drawn attention in the past.

5. On the basis of recent experience, the Advisory Committee was recommending reducing the budget of ONUB for the period 1 July to 31 December 2006 by $25 million. A further reduction of $4.4 million would occur as a result of the revised cost estimates for the 2006-2007 period. The Advisory Committee had also made a number of recommendations on posts, training and travel which should lead to savings.

6. The report contained a number of comments on the liquidation phase, particularly the relationship between the drawdown of ONUB and the establishment of the follow-on mission. Cooperation between the two entities would be essential during the transition period, on the understanding that the activities of each entity would be conducted separately and with the appropriate accounting of resources. The transition would present a welcome opportunity for ONUB to apply lessons learned from other peacekeeping missions.

7. **Ms. Udo** (Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the African Group, noted the results-based format of the proposed budget for ONUB. The budget had been prepared on the assumption that ONUB would withdraw from Burundi by 31 December 2006, and the African Group hoped that every effort would be made to build on the gains already made in that country. Experience had shown that only a phased and gradual

disengagement would ensure the consolidation of the mission's achievements, and the Group therefore welcomed the fact that the proposed frameworks reflected the continuing support by ONUB for the peace process and, in particular, the establishment of the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB). Future budget proposals for that Office should also be results-based.

8. At the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, the African Group had called on the Secretary-General to ensure that best practices from the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) were set out in a report designed to guide other missions during the liquidation process. ONUB would benefit a great deal from such a report.

9. She had taken due note of the Advisory Committee's recommendation to reduce the proposed budget of ONUB and would be seeking clarification of the potential impact of those cuts, particularly in the area of training. Significant sums were still owed to Member States for troops and contingent-owned equipment and a number of claims for death and disability were awaiting settlement. Every effort should be made to deal with those issues expeditiously.

10. **Mr. Traystman** (United States of America) welcomed the imminent successful completion of the mandate of ONUB and trusted that the strict implementation of an exit strategy and liquidation timetable would lead to a smooth and orderly transition and facilitate the work of BINUB in the areas of peace consolidation, reconstruction, national capacity-building and development. In that connection, following the closure of ONUB, country team agencies must ensure that they were in a position to take over many of its programmes.

11. Turning to the proposed budget for ONUB, he questioned the utility of establishing three new posts and stressed that, when downsizing and preparing for liquidation, missions should truly scale back. He was also concerned about the mission's training programme and agreed with the Advisory Committee that it should focus its use of training resources on the enhancement of the skills required for the liquidation phase. Any training of a general, functional nature should be conducted within the mission itself or by videoconference or e-learning. Rather than hiring consultants to conduct training in hazardous waste disposal and transportation of dangerous goods, expertise from other missions should be drawn upon.

12. Lastly, with regard to the consistent overbudgeting of ONUB, the rapid recalculation and consequent reduction of certain proposed expenditures by over $4 million led him to question the accuracy of other budget items. He would be pursuing that issue during informal consultations.

13. **Ms. Samayoa-Recari** (Guatemala) endorsed the statement made by the representative of Nigeria. Since Guatemala had contributed a number of military observers to ONUB, it was particularly interested in its activities and welcomed the positive developments in Burundi.

14. **Mr. Kozaki** (Japan), referring to paragraph 22 (b) of the performance report for ONUB (A/61/612) and to paragraph 11 of the Advisory Committee's report, enquired whether the Advisory Committee was recommending the suspension of financial regulation 5.2.

15. **Mr. Saha** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the question of how to fund and account for after-service health insurance benefits was common to all peacekeeping missions. In that connection, the Advisory Committee had not requested the suspension of financial regulation 5.2 but wished to remind the Fifth Committee that a decision must be taken on that issue.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.